

June 26, 2019

Rep. Alan Lowenthal, Chair
Rep. Paul Gosar, Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515



Representatives Lowenthal and Gosar:

On behalf of the Town of Paonia I am writing to offer our support for the Restoring Community Input and Public Protections in Oil and Gas Leasing Act of 2019, HR 3225. The Town of Paonia sits in the North Fork Valley of Delta County and our economy has changed from being mining dependent to a diverse economy with mining, tourism, organic agriculture, wineries, meat, dairy and other value-added agricultural products such as jam, prepared meals, and canned foods. We depend on the clean water that runs through the North Fork of the Gunnison River in order to irrigate the farms and provide water to the livestock and to produce the epic scenery that draw tourists here for hiking, biking, and to provide our wildlife the opportunity to flourish and draw hunters and fishermen to our region.

Oil and gas leasing and development carries with it many potential impacts that could bring risks to our local farmers, ranchers, orchardists, vintners, and other agricultural related businesses, as well as to those who use the public lands for hiking, biking, hunting and fishing. These risks include loss of public land access, potential for industrial development that directly displaces and disrupts other uses and current economic activity as well as wildlife habitat. In order to properly and fully consider these things, adequate time is necessary to properly consider proposed oil and gas leases, to allow the Board of Trustees time to offer input and information, and to provide meaningful comments to the relevant land management agencies. This is why we support HR 3225. In particular we support provisions for greater time for public and stakeholder input, shorter lease terms to ensure the agency is always using the best, most current information, and the requirement that other resources be given proper consideration when deciding which of our public lands are suitable for this activity and which are best managed for the many other public and environmental benefits they offer.

Our public lands are very important to the Town and the farmers, vintners, and ranchers that provide so much of our economic vitality. The Board of Trustees appreciate and expect the opportunity to participate fully in their management. HR 3225 is important legislation that would better ensure that farmers, ranchers, community members and agricultural organizations are able to provide that input and to better ensure the needs of our community is being met.

Thank you for your consideration, and we urge that this subcommittee support and mark up this legislation, and to support its passage into law.

With Warm Regards,



Kenneth D. Knight
Paonia Town Administrator